

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 20, 2021

1:34 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Robert Myers, Chair  
Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Peter Micciche  
Senator Jesse Kiehl

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Mike Shower, Vice Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 27

"An Act naming the irene Webber Bridge."

- MOVED HB 27 OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 27

SHORT TITLE: NAMING IRENE WEBBER BRIDGE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) STUTES

|          |     |  |
|----------|-----|--|
| 02/18/21 | (H) | PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21                                    |
| 02/18/21 | (H) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS                            |
| 02/18/21 | (H) | TRA  |
| 02/19/21 | (H) | FIN REFERRAL ADDED AFTER TRA                               |
| 02/19/21 | (H) | BILL REPRINTED   |
| 03/11/21 | (H) | TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124                                  |
| 03/11/21 | (H) | Moved HB 27 Out of Committee                               |
| 03/11/21 | (H) | MINUTE(TRA)  |
| 03/12/21 | (H) | TRA RPT 6DP  |
| 03/12/21 | (H) | DP: DRUMMOND, CRONK, HANNAN, SPOHNHOLZ,<br>MCCABE, HOPKINS |
| 03/26/21 | (H) | FIN AT 2:00 PM ADAMS 519                                   |
| 03/26/21 | (H) | Heard & Held   |
| 03/26/21 | (H) | MINUTE(FIN)  |
| 03/29/21 | (H) | FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519                                   |
| 03/29/21 | (H) | Moved HB 27 Out of Committee                               |

|          |     |   |
|----------|-----|---|
| 03/29/21 | (H) | MINUTE (FIN)  |
| 03/31/21 | (H) | FIN RPT 11DP  |
| 03/31/21 | (H) | DP: ORTIZ, EDGMON, LEBON, CARPENTER,<br>THOMPSON, JOHNSON, WOOL, JOSEPHSON, |
| 03/31/21 | (H) | RASMUSSEN, MERRICK, FOSTER  |
| 04/09/21 | (H) | TRANSMITTED TO (S)  |
| 04/09/21 | (H) | VERSION: HB 27  |
| 04/12/21 | (S) | READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS   |
| 04/12/21 | (S) | TRA, FIN  |
| 04/20/21 | (S) | TRA AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)   |

#### **WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Sponsor of HB 27.

SARA PERMAN, Staff  
Representative Louise Stutes  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HB 27 on behalf of the sponsor.

KIM ASPELUND, representing self  
Cordova Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony on HB 27.

KATRINA HOFFMAN, representing self  
Cordova, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony on HB 27.

MIKE WEBBER, representing self  
Cordova, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony on HB 27.

KRISTIN CARPENTER, representing self  
Cordova, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 27.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:34:52 PM](#)

**CHAIR ROBERT MYERS** called the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Kiehl, Micciche, Bishop and Chair Myers.

**HB 27-NAMING irene WEBBER BRIDGE**

[1:35:27 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS announced the consideration of HOUSE BILL NO. 27 "An Act naming the irene Webber Bridge."

[1:36:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LOUISE STUTES, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, speaking as sponsor, stated that HB 27 would name a bridge that spans the Scott River in Cordova in honor of irene Webber, who was an avid runner. The bridge is adjacent to a recreational area used in the annual Alaska Salmon Runs race, she said. irene Webber started the King Salmon Marathon in 1986. She was well known and well-loved in Cordova. Her family had a seine fishing operation in Prince William Sound.

[1:37:27 PM](#)

SARA PERMAN, Staff, Representative Louise Stutes, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, Presented HB 27 on behalf of the sponsor. She paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read [Original punctuation provided]:

This legislation renames Bridge 406, Scott Glacier No. 6 on the Copper River Highway to the irene Webber Bridge, in memory of the longtime Cordovan whose leadership and vision inspired Cordova's running community.

irene Webber, an Alutiiq woman born in Cordova, was the founder of the Cordova Running Club and is remembered as the first sole participant in Cordova's inaugural King Salmon Marathon in 1986. With her boundless enthusiasm, irene built that same marathon into the annual Alaska Salmon Runs.

[1:38:18 PM](#)

MS. PERMAN said irene Webber wrote her first name with a small "i" because she did not view herself as bigger than anyone else, which was part of her personality. She elaborated on how the King Salmon Marathon was started. In 1986, irene Webber decided she wanted to run a marathon, which she did. She continued to paraphrase the sponsor statement, which read:

After 34 years, the Alaska Salmon Runs now boasts five different athletic events - the King Salmon Marathon,

Sockeye Half-Marathon, Coho 10K, Humpy 5K and the Smooth One Mile Fun Run. The races have become a part of a renowned sporting event that sees almost 300 participants each year from around the state.

1:39:10 PM

MS. PERMAN commented that irene Webber struggled with addiction issues for a short period of her life. After rehab, her daughter, Kim, joined a college running club, so irene Webber decided she wanted to join her daughter. Before long, she was outrunning her daughter, which led to her avid running. She continued to paraphrase the sponsor statement:

irene was also responsible for founding the Cordova 2x2 Cancer Walk. The annual walk raises money to support Cordova cancer patients. Since its establishment in 2002, the event has raised more than \$100,000 for to assist Cordovans with cancer screenings or treatment expenses.

In addition to her contributions to the Cordova running community, irene selflessly volunteered her time to other philanthropic efforts supporting St. Jude's Children's Hospital, The American Cancer Society and S.S.D.S Ride-A-Thon.

irene passed away in 2018. She is remembered fondly by many. With the passing of this legislation, her contributions will continue to be memorialized by the Cordova community.

Thank you for your support of this legislation.

1:40:10 PM

MS. PERMAN said irene Webber's family has anecdotes to share. She shared her personal favorite anecdote, that the family referred to their dad as the captain but Mom was the admiral.

She reviewed a fiscal note for \$10,800 for costs of the signage. Her family did not want this bridge sign to be a memorial bridge so the signage would be "irene Webber Bridge." The bridge signs are slightly less in cost than the memorial bridge signs. She noted that members' packets contain resolutions from the City of Cordova and the Native village of Eyak.

1:42:00 PM

KIM ASPELUND, representing self, Cordova Alaska, said irene Webber was a big inspiration to her family, making each of her children and grandchildren feel special. She stated that her mom got her involved in volunteer work in their community. She participated in volunteer work with her mother each year for many organizations. She served as the lead volunteer for the American Cancer Society in Cordova. In fact, then-mayor Margy Johnson proclaimed an "irene Webber Day" to honor her leadership as an Alaska Native woman. She served as a role model for those with addictions to alcohol. She inspired many people to work through their addictions because she set an example of healthy choices. She said was known for her volunteer work with the American Cancer Society, St. Jude's Children's Hospital and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Ride-A-Thon. She said she would always say, "See you on the road." She always cheered runners to encourage them because she knew how hard they were working. She offered her belief that irene Webber would be so happy and grateful to see the bridge named after her. She vowed to participate in the run every year to carry on her mom's legacy.

1:46:03 PM

At ease

1:46:22 PM

CHAIR MYERS reconvened the meeting

1:46:34 PM

KATRINA HOFFMAN, Cordova, Alaska, said irene Webber was her mother-in law. She spelled her name with a little "i" and she was diminutive in size but not in her accomplishments. She related that she moved to Cordova a decade ago. She was born in the Prince William Sound village that no longer functions as a year-round community [Eyak]. She married someone from Katalla, 47 miles southeast of Cordova, which no longer functions as a year-round community. She said it seemed incredible that someone with such humble roots grew to be so beloved in Cordova that she is deserving to have a bridge named after her. Her legacy will stand the test of time, she said. Bill and irene Webber's three children, ten grandchildren, and many great-grandchildren have deep ties to Alaska.

MS. HOFFMAN said irene Webber was a businesswoman, a good neighbor, and a great sourdough cook. In fact, she still has her sourdough starter. She was a doting grandmother. At her memorial service, one of her grandsons, Christopher, said he knew his

grandmother to be two people: a wonderfully, loving grandma and a formidable deck boss whose words were law out on the water.

MS. HOFFMAN said when she and her husband, Mike, heard that the bridge at mile 9.5 was one of the bridges available for signage, the family jumped in the car to view the bridge. She continued:

When we got to the location, our hearts just swelled. We knew this was the bridge to name after Grandma i. The fireweed was abundant. It was blowing in the breeze. The creek it crosses goes all the way up to Scott Glacier. People ride their 4-wheelers up there. They recreate. Families have BBQs nearby. It's just a place that's as beautiful as she was as a person. And it really seems fitting that a place on the Copper River Delta that brings joy to so many people could be named after irene Webber, a woman who brought joy to so many people.

MS. HOFFMAN said she was honored to speak in support of HB 27 and she would be deeply grateful if members supported it.

[1:48:53 PM](#)

MIKE WEBBER, representing self, Cordova, Alaska, said his mother was a little woman with a big heart. irene Webber was raised in a tiny village in the middle of Prince William Sound. She married his dad, who was also a fisherman. He said his mother has a legacy of bringing the community of Cordova together. Everyone in the community knew his mother. She had a big heart and welcomed Cordova locals and visitors alike. To see her name on a bridge next to memorial bridges for Cordova veterans will be a real honor for him, he said. He said that Cordova's residents would enjoy seeing her name because she was this wonderful, little lady with a big heart who cared for everyone.

[1:51:41 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS opened public testimony on HB 27.

[1:51:58 PM](#)

KRISTIN CARPENTER, representing self, Cordova, Alaska, spoke in support of HB 27. She said that she coordinates and organizes the races that irene Webber started. She said she could not add much to what others have contributed.

MS. CARPENTER said one of her earliest members after arriving in Cordova in 1994 was participating in the King Salmon Marathon. In addition to the race being a fabulous community event, it is part

of a weekend-long Salmon Jam Festival, with about 70 people coming to Cordova to participate in the marathon or half-marathon. She characterized it as her favorite day of the year because it is the one day when everyone in the community runs together, whether they are serious or casual runners. She said there might be mothers with strollers, families, or groups of friends running together. She stated that irene Webber wanted people to focus on their health, in part, due to her battle with alcohol addiction.

[1:53:35 PM](#)

MS. CARPENTER said irene Webber made a tremendous contribution to community cohesiveness but she demonstrated her value of giving back to her community by showing people the importance of health and wellness. She urged members to support HB 27 to recognize irene Webber's important contributions to the community of Cordova.

[1:54:20 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS, after first determining no one wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 27.

REPRESENTATIVE STUTES remarked that the testimony showed how important irene Webber was to the community of Cordova. She was an active participant in helping Cordova maintain a healthy community.

[1:54:54 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said "Grandma i" sounded like a pretty special individual." He stated that these signs cost so little and it means so much to families and communities to recognize people who are doing so many positive things for Alaska. He said he was honored to support HB 27.

CHAIR MYERS solicited the will of the committee.

[1:55:50 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to report HB 27 from committee with individual recommendations and the attached fiscal note.

CHAIR MEYERS found no objection and HB 27 was reported from the Senate Transportation Standing Committee.

[1:56:23 PM](#)

At ease

[1:57:47 PM](#)

CHAIR MYERS reconvened the meeting.

1:58:00 PM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Myers adjourned the Senate Transportation Standing Committee meeting at 1:58 p.m.